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Saturday, July 27, 1867

REGISTRATION.—Marshall county, twelve precincts, whites 808; blacks 661.

In our columns, to-day, we publish from the Mobile Times, an able letter from Hon. John J. McRae, presenting his views upon the political situation and of the course which the true interests of our people demand that they should adopt in the present perilous exigency. The letter is a calm and statesman-like review of the subject, and is worthy of great consideration.

The people of Attala county have gone to work in good earnest to reconstruct their industrial interests. We have before us in the Chronicle, the proceedings of a meeting of some of the best citizens of the county, to organize an Agricultural and Mechanical Association. To that end the necessary measures were taken. In this movement the people of that county have set an example which is worthy to be followed in every county.

THE MEMPHIS BULLETIN.—Newspaper editors, like other people, sometimes change. We see it stated that the Memphis Bulletin has changed its course on the subject of Reconstruction, but it will not expect its readers to follow it in opposition to that policy until it answers its own arguments on the other side—which it can never do.

What will the President do?

The defiant tone of the President's last veto raised some doubt in the public mind touching his course in reference to the Reconstruction measures. His organ, the National Intelligencer, of the 23d, settles the point thus:

It is understood, in well-informed circles, that the President will cheerfully and promptly enter upon the execution of the reconstruction act of the last session of Congress, giving, if occasion requires, explicit instructions to the commanding generals. The utmost care will be taken to guard against possible collision with the generally understood wishes of Congress.

On the 13th, when Mr. Robinson, Democrat, announced that they were going to run Gen. Grant for the Presidency the Republican side of the House broke out into laughter, regarding it as an evidence that they are hopeless of success with any of their own party—Exchange.

In addition to the foregoing, it is known that a Democratic Committee from New York recently waited on Gen. Grant to tender him the Democratic nomination for the Presidency.

Now when it is understood that Gen. Grant is the chief agent of the dominant party in the execution of the Reconstruction measures, and has endorsed the Sheridan-Pope construction of them, and that he would go in to the Presidency (as he certainly will go) pledged to "fight it out on that line,"—a proper estimate may be placed on the sincerity of the professions of opposition which the (so-called) Northern Democracy are making to this Reconstruction policy. The inference is unavoidable that in their wild hunt after the spoils, they will not set in motion the reactionary movement against that policy which is so confidently predicted by its opposers in the South.

MR. DAVIS AT MONTREAL.—A large and fashionable audience was present at the Theatre Royal at Montreal, recently, to witness the representation of "The Rivals," for the benefit of the Southern Relief fund. Mr. Davis attended incognito, and between the first and second acts he was recognized by the audience, who arose and cheered him loudly. Subsequently the orchestra played Dixie, and on the termination three cheers were again given, which Mr. Davis recognized by repeated bows.

CARROLL COUNTY.—We make the following extract from a business letter to this office:

Registration is going on very satisfactorily. I think this county will vote for a Convention by a decided majority; this course may, and I think will tend to reconstruction; I do not believe any other will. Let us try it, and if it fails, we will thereby place ourselves right on the record of history, and throw the Radical Congress on their defence before the country for their refusal. Success to the Clarion.

The public debt is going up at the rate of over twenty-four millions a month. That is only two hundred and forty millions a year.

"Straining at a Gnat, and Swallowing a Camel."

Borrowing the idea from the logic of Mr. Hill, of Georgia, some anti-Reconstructionists reason thus: "The Military Bills are unconstitutional. You have taken an oath to support the Constitution, and therefore, if you vote for a Convention, and for changing the organic law of the State, you cannot escape perjury." This is the weakest of all the sophistry which has been employed to lead the public mind into error.

The Military Bills were not warranted by any express clause of the Constitution.

Their advocates assume that they are necessary in order to carry into effect objects which are expressed, and is a result of the exercise of the power to make war, and of the duty to secure to each State a Republican form of Government. There is no power granted in the Constitution to acquire territory by purchase or conquest, and yet it has been repeatedly exercised, commencing with the administration of the great founder of the school of strict constructionists, Mr. Jefferson, and continuing down to the present day.

But be this as it may, the people of the excluded States have had no voice in the passage of the Military Bills.—They are facts accomplished by the agency of others, and if the crime of "perjury" rests anywhere, it cannot be on their souls. The question for our people to determine is, whether they will make certain changes in the organic laws of their own State.—This action involves no crime. It involves no violation of any oath they have taken. It is simply a question of expediency to be determined by weighing in the scales of reason, the consequences which may result from their willingness or unwillingness to do so.

But by whom is this stumbling block thrown in the way of Reconstructionists? It is done by men who, in 1865, after taking the oath to support the Constitution of the United States, incorporated the emancipation feature into our State Constitution in obedience to the Executive decree. And more than all, these same men swore to support the proclamations of Mr. Lincoln, abolishing slavery, before abolition was incorporated into the Constitution of the United States, in accordance with the forms of that instrument. If such a crime as "perjury" has been committed, it was then and there according to this reasoning!—Men were required to swear in the same breath that they would support the Constitution, and an act which was perpetrated in violation of it! and when the Military Governor (Judge Sharkey) heard their complaints, he announced to them that "it was a question which they had no right to determine." The conquering power had prescribed the oath, and it must be taken.

Now, thousands of good and patriotic men subscribed to these oaths as a necessity, believing their refusal would aggravate the misfortunes of the country, and they are now co-operating in the present Reconstruction movement. There are others however, who took them willingly, and not only so, but administered them to other persons, are now throwing these obstacles in the way of the pacification of the country. They were remarkably scrupulous in the performance of the role that was assigned them in 1865, but now they are stricken with a love for the Constitution which amounts to madness. Oh "ye blind guides, who strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."

We see it stated that the N. O. Bulletin has declared against accepting the Congressional plan of reconstruction. The truth is, there is no organized opposition to the holding of a Convention in Louisiana. Reconstruction is regarded by all parties as a foregone conclusion. The unfair administration of the laws by the District Commander, joined to the apathy of the resident white citizens, we apprehend, will throw the State into the hands of the Radicals.

A Committee in Alabama, through Gen. Clanton as Chairman, have called a State Convention of Conservatives, to be assembled at Montgomery, on the 3d September. It is called "without reference to differences upon present questions of policy;" and the Mail, which is the Capitoline organ of the anti-Conventionists, accompanies it with a sort of "help me Cassius or I sink" appeal to the negroes to join them in the Convention.

As the "differences upon present questions of policy," viz: whether or not the South will acquiesce in the Military Bills as a finality of the sectional difficulty, cannot be compromised without an abandonment of its position by one wing of the conservatives or the other, we cannot understand how such a Convention can agree upon a platform for the guidance of the people in the pending elections, when their choice is to be expressed upon that vital issue.

From the Mobile Times.  
Letter from Hon. John J. McRae, on the Situation.

July 20, 1867.  
Editor of the Mobile Daily Times:  
SIR—My attention has been called to the following publication in the radical newspaper published in this city, with the suggestion of friends that the letter referred to might by some be supposed to have been written by me, and that it was due to myself to correct the erroneous impression.

THE REASON WHY.—Hon. John McRae, of Mississippi, in a letter to the Meridian Chronicle thus concisely states his reasons for being a Republican:

"I advocate reconstruction upon the Congressional plan; and recognizing the fact that the Republican party is in full power; that it is likely to continue in power for an indefinite period; that it is the only party in existence that can do the South any good; that it has dealt with the South, not according to her just deserts, if rebellion be a crime, but in a spirit of magnanimity unparalleled in the history of rebellions, and that it has for its object the education and elevation of the toiling masses of the republic—for these reasons I expect to affiliate and work with the Republican party."

I have written no letter to the Meridian Chronicle, and the above extract was not written by me. The sentiments which it contains are not mine, and the writer "Hon. John McRae, of Mississippi," is unknown to me. I do not affiliate with the Republican party, nor do I expect to do so. I can have no respect for a party which disfranchises me and confers the right to vote upon my negro, that was, who is incapable of its judicious exercise.

I do not believe the late war was a rebellion or a civil war, but a war between two distinct and separate governments, the United States and the Confederate States of America. I do not therefore believe that the people of the Confederate States were rebels or traitors. The United States, as the conquering power, under the rule of the Republican party, has dealt with the people of the Confederate States unkindly, harshly, bitterly, and in a spirit of malignity and hate among civilized people unparalleled.

I do not approve of the Congressional plan for reconstruction. I think the military bills are odious and tyrannical; but I may, from necessity or a choice between evils, submit to what I do not approve. In this light, I think it best for our people to reconstruct their State governments under these bills, for the reason that they afford the only hope, bad as it is, of giving them the control of their State affairs. If they do not reconstruct under these bills, the question goes back to Congress to say under what bills they shall reconstruct. Congress will say the rebel sentiment destroyed reconstruction and the restoration of the Union, and will restrict the right of suffrage to loyal men, meaning Radicals and blacks, excluding all who aided or in any way participated in the rebellion. This will put the State governments at once in the hands of the Radicals. The question is, will we make an effort to take advantage of the small opportunity we have under the present bills to prevent this result?

The mode proposed to reconstruct is by a Convention, and it is said the people have a choice to vote for or against it. So they have, but it is a coerced choice to vote for the Convention bad as it is, or to vote down the Convention and take something worse. If the Convention is voted down, the war is the situation? Some say we will remain under military rule, as we are now. Will this be so? Not at all. Congress is determined to reconstruct, and on its own terms, and will immediately pass other bills for this purpose. Do any suppose the terms will be better under other bills than they are under the present ones? I do not. In other words, we will certainly restrict still further the right of suffrage, and may include in them harsher measures, punishment and confiscation. But without these, they cannot once, by restricting the right of suffrage, reconstruct the States in the hands of the Radicals, and then we may have punishment and confiscation by the State Legislatures. Do any expect, if the Convention is voted down, that they will get the negro as a political element, or of negro suffrage in future bills for reconstruction? I do not. I am sure Congress will make this the predominant element.

But some say a revolution is taking place in public sentiment at the North, and the Radical party is breaking down. Therefore vote down the Convention, and we will get the better terms. I do not see this myself. The party is stronger now than it has ever been, and the present Congress is a new Congress, the first and regular session would not have been held until December next, but for a bill passed by the last Congress that a new one will assemble on the 4th of March next. Have we not seen the old one going out, and a new one coming in? Have we not seen, of better terms than the present bills offer, objectionable as they are? I see none. But from the bill just passed Congress will vote down the Convention, and we will get the better terms. I do not see this myself. 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